

From: kbk@float.ne.mediaone.com@inetgw
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/27/02 11:52pm
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

Gentlemen:

On November 5, 2001 I sent the following letter to Thomas Reilly, Massachusetts Attorney General, stating that I supported him in his decision not to join the settlement.

I am not, nor have I been, associated with the software industry per se, but I have used computers as an engineer and physicist for over 35 years. I have watched the industry develop and I'm pretty well acquainted with the fortunes of the companies involved. I do not have a financial interest in any software company, although I did own some Apple stock for a few years.

I stand by the comments in my letter, with one exception: I have been in communication with Starbucks, and they have now added the ability to use credit cards on starbucks.com. I believe this is due, at least in part, to comments by people like myself. It should be noted, however, that using Passport is much more convenient, and that is the way it usually goes.

As an aside, and with reference to the Enron debacle, I would surely like to see all contributions by corporations to government officials cease. I note that Microsoft is now making heavy contributions.

Further, the Microsoft proposal to put computers and software into schools as part of a settlement was laughable to those in the know, because that is exactly how you extend the monopoly to the detriment of the competition.

As a Republican I voted for President Bush, and I continue to support him vigorously. However, I cannot agree with the administration's policy on the settlement of this case. I would like to see Microsoft's business practices curtailed before more damage is done.

Sincerely,

Kurt B. Kaiser

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Ipswich, MA 01938
978 356 5220

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@Letter
@To {
Massachusetts Attorney General

One Ashburton Place
Boston, MA 02108-1698
}
@CC {}
{ Dear Attorney General Reilly:

I am pleased that you have decided to proceed with your action against Microsoft. Although the Appeals Court unanimously determined that Microsoft's actions were monopolistic, the settlement does not provide any remedy which would correct the situation or prevent its further extension in the future. Part of the justification for the settlement appears to be along the lines of, "What is good for Microsoft is good for the country."

There are precious few vendors now which provide applications for PCs. Adobe and Intuit come to mind. The rest have been crushed (Netscape) or bought out by Microsoft (Visio). Real Player, I understand, will no longer work with Windows XP as Microsoft extends its domination into the multimedia applications. MS has a long history of this kind of abuse, going back to the days of DOS when incompatibilities were deliberately introduced to defeat DR DOS.

Microsoft does not have a superior product, just the dominant one. Bill Gates has singlehandedly destroyed more creativity than any person in history. There is a theory that if MS was stopped, the consumer would suffer. I don't believe that to be the case. There would be a relatively short period of stagnation, during which the current OS and applications would be used, followed by a great outpouring of superior products. Right now, few want to try to compete, the risk is too great.

I notice that the New York Times is now offering an online edition which is exactly the same as the print edition. To view it, you must have Microsoft Windows and Microsoft Internet Explorer. If the consumer wants to use his Macintosh, or Netscape, or Linux with Netscape, well, he's just out of luck. It doesn't make sense economically for the NYT to develop compatibility with those OS and applications because of the dominance of Microsoft. Why are they incompatible? Because of Microsoft's policy of "embrace, extend, and extinguish." Microsoft has introduced incompatibilities (e.g. ActiveX) which make sure that competition is shut out.

If you want to buy coffee on starbucks.com, you have to use Microsoft Passport. No credit cards or PayPal are accepted. I expect to see many more sites like that. Apparently a major reason Starbucks chose MS Passport was that MS claimed it was much safer to have a central repository than to have the consumer store credit card numbers on his own machine. As you may have heard, Wired recently had an article about a programmer who defeated Passport Wallet in less than an hour, and that MS had to shut down Passport to make "corrections." I personally don't want my credit card numbers in the hands of MS because I believe they are not competent to safeguard them. I resent the lack of choice that is developing.

These situations could not have occurred if Microsoft had not been allowed by the government to establish the most pervasive monopoly the world has known.

Sincerely,
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